

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN STEVEN LATOURETTE
RAILROAD SUBCOMMITTEE
HEARING ON
"NEW HANDS ON THE AMTRAK THROTTLE"
SEPTEMBER 28, 2006**

Good Morning. I'd like to welcome you all to this morning's hearing entitled "New hands on the Amtrak throttle."

Our one and only witness today is Mr. Alexander Kummant, the new President of Amtrak.

Mr. Kummant, I would like to welcome you to your first hearing before our Subcommittee, where I can assure you that we all have a keen interest in Amtrak and passenger rail.

I understand that you had quite a career in the private sector before accepting the top job at Amtrak. I hope that you can tell us a little more about yourself and how you came to be interested in running our nation's passenger railroad.

Amtrak has had its share of critics over the years and stacks of reports have been written on how to improve the company's operations. Meanwhile, both the Northeast Corridor and Amtrak's aging long distance fleet have continued to deteriorate due to lack of capital funding.

There are also some labor issues needing attention. Some of Amtrak's unions have not had a new contract in many years. In certain locations, like New York City and the West Coast, Amtrak is having trouble attracting skilled labor because wages are so low.

Around the country, passengers are complaining because Amtrak's long distance trains often arrive hours late. I realize that much of this problem is due to heavy congestion on the freight railroads, but we're hoping that you have some new ideas to help improve the situation.

Mr. Kummant, I know that you have only been on the job for a couple of weeks, so I truly appreciate your taking the time to visit with us this morning.

I know that it is probably too early to ask for many specifics, but I hope you can share your vision for Amtrak -- as well as your strategy for achieving that vision.

I am looking forward to a most informative hearing.

Before yielding to Ms. Brown, I would like to request Unanimous Consent to allow thirty days for Members to revise and extend their remarks and to permit the submission of additional statements and materials by witnesses.

Without objection.

Now I will yield to Ms. Brown for any opening statement she may have.

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